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FM AMEMBASSY CAIRO
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 0704
INFO RUEHKH/AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM PRIORITY 1220
RUEHJI/AMCONSUL JEDDAH PRIORITY 0229
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY

UNCLAS CAIRO 002246

SENSITIVE
SIPDIS

NEA/ELA FOR SCHALL
OES/OA FOR BLOOM AND TIRPAK

E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: [EWWT](#) [SENV](#) [PREL](#) [EG](#)
SUBJECT: EGYPTIAN AUTHORITIES WILL NOT CLEAR R/V OCEANUS IN
TIME FOR MISSION TO PROCEED

REF: A. STATE 729184
[1](#)B. CAIRO 1513
[1](#)C. 10/8/08 HILLHERNDON-TIRPAK EMAIL

[1](#)1. (U) SEE ACTION REQUEST IN PARAGRAPH 4.

[1](#)2. (SBU) SUMMARY: Despite repeated approaches over several months, the Ministry of Defense has not made a decision regarding the research vessel Oceanus' request to enter Egyptian waters in order to conduct meteorological and geological research in the Red Sea. Embassy Cairo delivered Ref A request to the Ministries of Foreign Affairs and Scientific Research in July. In September, both ministries told us that the sticking point was opposition from MoD. We believe that MoD is stalling because it does not want to refuse the Oceanus' request outright and that the Oceanus will have to forego the Egypt portion of its research mission. END SUMMARY.

[1](#)3. (SBU) Embassy Cairo delivered Ref A request to conduct research in the Red Sea in July, on behalf of a joint project of the Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution of the U.S. and King Abdullah University of Science and Technology of Saudi Arabia. The line ministries (Foreign Affairs and Scientific Research) had no objection but noted that they could not proceed without the concurrence of the Ministry of Defense (MoD). MoD has not responded to various approaches on this issue for two months. On October 20, Major General Ahmed Motaz, Chief of U.S. Affairs, told polmiloff that he is waiting for further information from the Ministry of Higher Education before making a decision. COMMENT: The GOE is suspicious of academic research missions in general and imposes a highly bureaucratic review process. MoD is wary of maritime research missions in particular and refused permission to the last U.S. academic research vessel we requested clearance for, in 2002. The Ministry of Higher Education has no official role in reviewing scientific research requests from foreign institutions. We interpret MG Motaz' point as a stalling tactic because MoD does not want to refuse R/V Oceanus' request outright. END COMMENT.

[1](#)4. (SBU) ACTION REQUEST: The R/V Oceanus has started the second leg of its research in the Red Sea, having already received clearance from Sudanese and Saudi Arabian authorities to enter their waters. We do not anticipate that we will get a decision from GOE authorities in time to allow the Oceanus to enter Egyptian waters on schedule. We will continue to seek a favorable decision with MoD but apprised the research team on board the Oceanus on October 20 of the situation. We request that OES/OA provide post with at least six months notice for future maritime research missions as well as proposed dates of Suez Canal transit. OES should advise academic institutions that it will likely be necessary

to have an official GOF observer on board maritime research missions in order to secure permission to work in Egyptian waters. END ACTION REQUEST.

SCOBET